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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 001740

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: UNHCR ON THE DISPLACED IN PAKISTAN

Classified By: Gerald M Feierstein, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a July 22 meeting with Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) Eric Schwartz, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Country Representative Guenet Guebre Christos and staff requested that the United States Government make clear to the Government of Pakistan that only returns which are truly voluntary will be durable, that it will be much more difficult to win international humanitarian assistance funding if there is a repeat displacement, and that humanitarian access and security will be an issue if the displaced are urged to go back too early. The UNHCR Representative voiced support for a high-level UN Humanitarian Coordinator to provide much-needed coordination of both donors and international humanitarian assistance and development providers. The Assistant Secretary expressed condolences for the recent shooting death of a UNHCR staff member and promised continued U.S. support for UNHCR. He undertook at UNHCR's request to encourage the UN to strengthen its security presence in Pakistan.

¶2. (C) Asked about early recovery, Guebre Christos said that, while continuing to focus on providing humanitarian assistance to the residual caseload of displaced, UNHCR will also monitor return and provide protection services including an information/referral service to assist returnees. UNHCR will take on an advocacy role, and Guebre Christos hopes, in addition, to provide temporary shelter for those vulnerable who are rebuilding houses or otherwise unable to return immediately to their homes. Guebre Christos noted that a UN-GOP program for refugee-affected areas would in some instances also provide rehabilitation to areas affected by hosting the displaced. UNHCR staff also raised issues concerning other donor funding, Waziristan displacement, unresolved registration/benefit questions, assistance needs of those who remained in the conflict-affected areas, differential assistance to those from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and the situation of Afghan refugees. End summary.

Condolences and Security

¶3. (U) In a July 22 meeting with UNHCR Country Representative Guenet Guebre Christos and staff, PRM Assistant Secretary Eric Schwartz extended U.S. Government

condolences on the shooting death of UNHCR Pakistani staff member Zill-e-Usman at Kacha Gari IDP camp and the wounding of another UNHCR staff member. Reiterating the message he had conveyed by phone to High Commissioner Gutteres, Schwartz assured UNHCR Pakistan of the complete support of the United States. At the end of the meeting, A/S Schwartz and Refcoord also signed the condolence book for Mr. Usman.

14. (C) Guebre Christos asked the Assistant Secretary's help in raising with the UN the need for an increased UN security presence and a security advisor in Pakistan to strengthen staff security. Unlike in Afghanistan, where a "full information-collecting mechanism" is in place, in Pakistan the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has only two security officers in Islamabad and one officer in each of four major cities and provides "no analysis" of what is happening on the ground. The UN Resident Coordinator has the security lead in Pakistan which is a UN "phase 3" security environment. (Note: phase 4 requires evacuation.)

Funding the Appeal

15. (C) Guebre Christos expressed appreciation for U.S. generosity in responding to the crisis of the internally displaced but expressed concern for the fact that overall global response to the UN's Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan appeal was still only at 42 percent. Schwartz requested statistics on the five or six other major donors to UNHCR's programs worldwide and their percentage response to this

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appeal. This information, he said, could be a very powerful tool in urging these countries to raise their level of support to UNHCR for the Pakistan IDP crisis. UNHCR Assistant Representative Kilian Kleinschmidt noted that while European nations had been slow in gearing up a response to this crisis, they were now responding.

Humanitarian Coordinator

16. (C) The third issue raised by UNHCR Pakistan staff was the lack of adequate donor coordination in Pakistan. Kleinschmidt noted that when donors lost confidence in the Pakistani government, they did not transfer their support for humanitarian assistance to the international organizations. He also noted that there was no link between donor support for relief and support for development. A/S Schwartz concurred on the valuable link that coordination can play between relief and development. When asked whether they would support an overall UN humanitarian assistance coordinator, Guebre Christos replied, "yes, absolutely," and her staff agreed. (N.B. Schwartz passed this information to USUN Deputy Representative Alex Wolff.)

17. (SBU) Guebre Christos commented that despite the speed and size of the Malakand internal displacement, the international humanitarian assistance response was strong, although not as responsive as it could have been in the IDP hosting areas.

18. (C) With regard to early recovery and reconstruction, Guebre Christos and staff noted the "disconnect" between assessments and plans by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations, and other humanitarian assistance providers. Guebre Christos reiterated the need for "serious, high-level donor coordination" and added that any coordinator would "have to be listened to by the Banks."

Return from the Camps

¶9. (C) Guebre Christos commended the GOP's commitment through the Return Policy Framework to the safe, voluntary, informed and dignified return of the displaced, but she said that return out of the camps was less than voluntary. She noted that in camps that had recently virtually emptied due to returns, government officials had informed the displaced that they should register to return home because the camps would soon close and food would no longer be provided there. UNHCR staff emphasized that to be sustainable, return must be truly voluntary, and they expressed fear that if people are displaced a second time, the international donors will not come forward to fund assistance for them. A/S Schwartz said he would make these points to the Government of Pakistan.

¶10. (C) Guebre Christos noted that many of those leaving the camps for Swat may be able to return to the district but will not necessarily be able to return to their homes or villages for reasons of insecurity. While the UN has sent assessment missions to Swat and Buner, there is no way for UNHCR officials to ascertain the safety or security of the areas to which individual IDPs are returning. Humanitarian access remains an issue if people need assistance in secondary displacement in their home districts. UNHCR Head of Sub-Office Peshawar Felipe Camargo, who was on the assessment team which went into Mingora, commented that movement within the city was still severely restricted by curfew and that the city was "not ready" for civilian life. The UN is looking at establishing a humanitarian hub in Swat; it already has four in Buner.

Issues in the Transition to Return

¶11. (C) Kleinschmidt noted that while main roads and urban centers throughout the areas from which displacement

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originated are now secure, elsewhere in these districts is not. He stressed that the GOP has to realize that it cannot define success in terms of one hundred percent return. "People must be treated as people" not as percentage output, he added. It is "too early to dissolve the Emergency Response Unit"; the humanitarian emergency is not over.

¶12. (C) Guebre Christos noted that there will also continue to be new displacement. Kleinschmidt said that just the day before (July 21), the GOP had pressed UNHCR to provide assistance to people newly displaced from Upper to Lower Dir. He added that the government now hopes to shift the focus of response to small, short-term displacements. In other words, response would focus on the provision of assistance to people who, while awaiting either restoration of security or the rebuilding of a home, would remain for a limited period of time at a short distance from the villages to which they hoped to return. He said that the government was indicating that UNHCR should set up small camps for this purpose. He added that access and security for humanitarian assistance providers would be an issue in this regard and that same day security assessments of the areas in question would be necessary.

Waziristan Displacement

¶13. (C) The UNHCR team reported that the GOP continues to refuse access for international humanitarian assistance providers to D.I. Khan and Tank, the areas of displacement for those fleeing Waziristan. UNHCR is working through an onsite, national NGO whose people are from the areas of origin of the displaced and are working to facilitate registration and provision of assistance. The government will not permit the establishment of camps in D.I. Khan or Tank, and those displaced from Waziristan would be unwilling to go to camps in any event. However, Ivan Sturm, UNHCR's

newly arrived emergency coordinator, noted that those Waziristan-displaced people with nowhere else to stay were already starting to move into schools. Kleinschmidt said that the army wants to win hearts and minds by delivering assistance but is viewed by the displaced with mistrust.

Unresolved Registration Issues

¶14. (C) Guebre Christos raised UNHCR's continuing concern that unresolved IDP registration issues were "creating havoc." Those who had displaced from areas immediately next to, but not included in, the officially designated "conflict zones" were being denied the government-sanctioned registration which would permit return benefits. Kleinschmidt added that others who had never had national identity cards or who had misspelled names and other anomalies on their cards also needed to have their cases resolved. Kleinschmidt added that there is also a problem created by the fact that those who had been displaced will return home with cash and material benefits while there is no benefit package in place for those who had been left behind at home to suffer insecurity and deprivations in the areas of conflict. He noted some cash infusion to those who did not leave would be necessary.

Early Recovery and Rehabilitation

¶15. (SBU) Asked about UNHCR's planned role in early recovery, Guebre Christos noted that UNHCR participates in the early recovery cluster headed by the UN Development Program (UNDP). UNHCR would like to focus on providing humanitarian assistance to the residual caseload of displaced while also monitoring and providing protection services to those returning. Specifically, UNHCR would like to set up an information/referral service to provide those returning help with getting access to cash or other benefits, reclaiming their land or other property, seeking information about

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rebuilding assistance, etc. UNHCR would use information gained in addressing these issues for the purposes of advocacy. UNHCR will also provide temporary shelter for the vulnerable who are rebuilding or otherwise unable to return immediately to their homes.

¶16. (SBU) UNHCR staff expressed the hope that funds available for development of NWFP would give priority to areas and people affected by the conflict. In addition, they anticipated that assistance under the five-year, USD 140 million Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas Agreement (RAHA) between the UN (UNHCR and UNDP) and the GOP would provide rebuilding/rehabilitation assistance in those RAHA-eligible areas which had also hosted IDPs.

FATA Displaced

¶17. (C) Guebre Christos and staff expressed concern that the displaced from Bajaur were not receiving the same degree of support as the displaced from districts in the Northwest Frontier Province. She added that those from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), such as Bajaur, are seen as "primitive and foreign" unlike those from NWFP who are seen as Pakistanis. She stressed that "the most important hearts and minds to win are those of the tribal people." UNHCR staff did confirm, however, that families from Bajaur were, like the NWFP displaced, receiving the government-promised, PKR 25,000 (now approximately USD 305) debit cards. However, Kleinschmidt noted that the Frontier Crimes Regulations allows the government not to provide assistance to hostile tribes in or from the FATA.

Afghan Refugees

¶18. (SBU) In a quick review of the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Guebre Christos said that many people in Pakistan believe that the Afghan refugees are responsible for their being targeted by the Taliban. It is hoped that the UN-GOP Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) Program will help mitigate some of these perceptions. RAHA assistance programs will benefit both current refugees and past and present hosting communities and will also rebuild infrastructure damaged by previous refugee presence. Of the 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, some 40 percent are in refugee villages; 10 percent live rurally, and 50 percent are urban, often intermixed with displaced Pakistanis.

¶19. (U) This cable has been cleared by Assistant Secretary Schwartz.

FEIERSTEIN